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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Self-perceived traits of servant leadership in AmeriCorps Volunteers: A mixed method concurrent explanatory study

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Abstract. Although the tenets of modern servant leadership originated by Greenleaf (1970) have long been applied to service enterprise, no known research has applied the principles to the self-perception of AmeriCorps volunteers who commit to one year of service. The purpose of this mixed-method study was to determine whether volunteers who commit to one year of national service identify with characteristics and behaviors of modern servant leadership in order to operationalize the volunteer leadership experience for both the volunteer and the sponsoring agency, and to provide volunteers with personal awareness of their experiences. The quantitative portion of the study employed the results of 51 self/leader reports of Barbuto and Wheeler's (2006) Servant Leadership Questionnaire (SLQ) to discover that some significance existed between their original study and this study. The qualitative portion involved gathering information from 10 semi-structured, individual interviews. Analysis revealed two major themes: personal awareness responses and direct action responses. These themes supported favorable responses to the research questions. Empirical and narrative responses allow directors and leaders of AmeriCorps and long-term service programs to consider alternatives by which to discern incoming applications, reinforce candidate self-awareness, and provide a foundation for future research.

Keywords: AmeriCorps, servant leadership, intentional community, mixed-method

Introduction

AmeriCorps, founded in 1993 as a result of President Clinton's National and Community Service Trust Act (National and Community Service Trust Act, Pub. L. No. 103-82), is the network of national service programs designed to involve American citizens in rigorous service and help meet the country's needs, including volunteer support in education, health, and public safety (AmeriCorps, 2014). Furthermore, AmeriCorps is "a network of local, state, and national service programs that connects more than 75,000 Americans each year in intensive service to meet our country's critical needs" (Corporation for National and Community Service, 2014). Included in highly variable aspects of AmeriCorps programs are individual and team-based services, training and member development, contact with service beneficiaries, multiple project choices, diversity among program participants, and leadership opportunities (Epstein, 2009). "Ethic of Service" appears in AmeriCorps literature to describe civic engagement and readiness to serve others. AmeriCorps' pledge (2014) expresses the essence of service and willingness of members to place the well-being of others before their own (Bruell, 1997). The Georgia Commission for Service and Leadership (, 2011) noted that AmeriCorps program directors merge multiple doctrines of servant leadership into their orientation and training of AmeriCorps members.

The model of modern servant leadership was presented in 1970 by AT&T executive Robert K. Greenleaf (1970) in the publication of his short book, *The Servant as Leader*. A popular essayist and manager, Greenleaf consulted with businesses and educational institutions on how to transform ineffective leadership models into prototypes whose

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programs foster a desire to serve first. The primary and foundational characteristic of servant leadership originated with the idea that one has:

> a natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then, a conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. That person is sharply different from one who is leader first, perhaps because of the need to assuage an unusual power drive or to acquire material possessions. The leader-first and the servant-first are two extreme types. Between them there are shadings and blends that are part of the infinite variety of human nature. (Greenleaf, 1970, p. 7)

A commitment to serving the needs of others and the surrounding community is the heart of servant leadership. Rather than a leadership model focused simply on the needs of leaders, this service-first ethic became the focus of leadership scholars in AmeriCorps. Despite a presumably natural fit between servant leadership and AmeriCorps, no known research delved into identifying traits of servant leaders as depicted in Greenleaf's original model in application to AmeriCorps volunteers. Servant leadership is not a topic researched broadly (Parris & Peachey, 2012), and much of the literature articulates user-specific, qualitative, and decidedly circumstantial research (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006; Beck, 2009; Russell & Stone, 2002). Greenleaf's vision—that service be a core value of the philosophy (Keith, 2008)—directed organizations and institutions to execute the servant leadership model, yet literature that combines AmeriCorps and servant leadership is scarce.

The pinnacle of an organization's success depends on two variables: people and the organization itself. Pairing the two is an area of inquiry organizational behaviorists continually question (Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009; Irving & Longbotham, 2009). Service and education sectors can no longer afford to mismatch leadership assets with organizational cultures and expectations. Light (2008) forecasted increased need for civic leadership in both public and non-profit sectors due to an influx of expected retirements in government. An additional concern for role fulfillment is an expected increase in AmeriCorps volunteers to 250,000 by 2020 (AmeriCorps, 2014). With intensified need for civic leadership service, how will AmeriCorps define transformative governance? Before creating guidelines to fill projected needs, gathering information regarding present strengths of AmeriCorps leaders through the servant leadership model is essential.

The purpose of this study was to determine whether year-of-service volunteers identified with traits of Greenleaf's model of servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1970). The intent of this mixed methods concurrent explanatory study (Creswell & Plano, 2006) was to attain quantitative results with a web-based survey while interviewing a sample of the same participants using semi-structured interviews. Although several organizations under the AmeriCorps umbrella incorporate the servant leadership paradigm, efforts are sporadic and well intentioned, but not uniform. By identifying servant leadership traits in national year-of-service volunteers, empirical and narrative data can generate organizational change and efficacy, and determine work site assignation of future volunteers. Provided to participants, this same data offers information and insights to support participant understanding of behavioral leadership.

A recent, systematic literature review of servant leadership theory in organizational contexts (Parris & Peachey, 2012) identified servant leadership as sustainable in organizations, leading to investigation across multiple contexts. Researchers espouse that servant leadership remains understudied yet is still practiced conspicuously in meeting rooms and as a business paradigm (Parris & Peachey, 2012; Spears, 2010). Criteria for inclusion in the literature review included only publications from peer-reviewed journals, "servant leader" as a search term, and collection of quantitative or qualitative data. Thirty-nine studies met the criteria. Parris and Peachey's (2012) sample incorporated 11 qualitative studies, 27 quantitative studies, and one mixed-method study. Of the 39, none linked servant leadership to AmeriCorps, intentional communities, year-of-service, or service year.

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Greenleaf's highlight was a lifestyle choice rather than management design (Greenleaf, 1977). This study employed volunteers who obliged themselves to both a year of intentional living (endeavoring toward a common vision) (Intentional Communities, 2013) and one year of service. Determining the current state of servant leadership research, Parris and Peachey (2012) surmised that investigation was needed to determine personal characteristics and leader qualities. Accordingly, Beck (2009) researched antecedents of servant leadership and called for further research, noting the sample lacked cultural and geographical multiplicity. This study responded to Beck's call by recruiting volunteers who resided in several states and who were of varying ethnicities. This study represents the first mixed-method study that combined Greenleaf's model of servant leadership lifestyle and self-perceived leadership traits in AmeriCorps national year-of-service volunteers. Assumptions included that AmeriCorps volunteers held experience in leadership roles, and thus identified with tenets of servant leadership. Second, AmeriCorps volunteers identified with the description and explanation of Greenleaf's model of a servant leader. The research sought to answer the following:

1. Do long-term and AmeriCorps volunteers self-identify with traits of servant leadership?
2. What information regarding self-perceived leadership traits in year-of-service volunteers emerge from semi-structured interviews?
3. Were the traits of servant leadership modeled for the volunteers prior to committing to residing in an intentional (i.e., based on mutual principles) community?

Delimitations of this study included current male and female AmeriCorps year-of-service volunteers who resided in the United States. These volunteers lived within intentional communities, and each held a minimum of a bachelor's degree. Each committed to 1,700 hours of service and participated in the study between weeks 46 and 50 of the 50-week obligation. Each participant was between the ages of 23 and 61 and all were American citizens who had prior volunteer experience.

Methods

The research design, approved by the Institutional Review Board at Creighton University, Omaha, Nebraska (IRB# 13-16791), was a mixed- method concurrent explanatory design (Creswell & Plano, 2006). The purpose was to determine whether self-perceived traits of servant leadership were present in AmeriCorps volunteers to operationalize the servant leadership model.

Two primary considerations emerged in the study: verifying servant leadership traits and understanding assigned meaning from their experiences. The first consideration was to obtain empirical data in a quantitative survey to verify servant leadership traits, using Barbuto and Wheelers' (2006) Servant Leadership Questionnaire (SLQ), Self (or Leader) only. The SLQ was appropriate as it focuses on individual leaders, in comparison to those focusing on other design variables, such as moral and ethical servant leadership frameworks (Patterson, 2003), organizational servant leadership frameworks (Laub, 1999), servant leadership and change management frameworks (Kool & Dierondonck, 2012), and follower impressions of a leader framework (Dennis & Bocarnea, 2005). The SLQ asks participants to rank their thoughts and behaviors surrounding servant leadership using a 5-point Likert scale, identifying the degree to which the characteristics most accurately describe them. To answer research question number one, the self-identity of AmeriCorps volunteers as servant leaders, analyzed data sets were compared to Barbuto and Wheeler's (2006) original analysis. In both studies, leaders used Likert scale response choices 0= Not at all, 1= Rarely, 2= Sometimes, 3=Fairly Often, 4= Frequently, if not always, and significance of 0.05 ($p < 0.05$). When developing the leader version of the SLQ, Barbuto and Wheeler's subjects were members of a professional organization attending a statewide convention. These leaders were elected to their positions,

and all were permanent residents in the Midwestern United States. All held at least a bachelor's degree; the average age was 51 years, 65% were women and 35% were men (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006).

According to Barbuto and Wheeler (2006), the SLQ sampled in 2002 measured 11 tenets of servant leadership described by Greenleaf (1970) and identified by Spears (2010): calling, listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, growth, and community building (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2002). A factor analysis reduced the data to five independent subscales that were subsequently used to test reliability and convergent, divergent, and predictive validity. These five servant leadership factors "appear to be conceptually and empirically distinct" (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006, p. 318): altruistic calling, emotional healing, organizational stewardship, persuasive mapping, and wisdom.

Altruistic Calling is a firmly held desire to make a positive difference in the life of someone (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006). The desire is coupled with a generosity of spirit often associated with philanthropy. Leaders scoring highly in the domain of altruistic calling naturally put the needs of others before their own. Emotional healing depicts a leader's commitment and desire to foster spiritual recovery from hardship or trauma. Leaders who employ emotional healing are highly empathic and skilled in active listening, adding to their proficiency in healing. These leaders create environments that are safe to voice personal and professional issues. Organizational stewardship is highlighted by the degree and depth to which leaders arrange for the stakeholders of an organization to make a positive contribution to the community through development and outreach. A group's mission, ethics, vision, and values are transparent and responsible for the overall strength of an organization. An organization strong in stewardship reflects a desire to give back to a community. Consistent effort to reinforce a community spirit in one's place of work is a defining trait of organizational stewardship. Persuasive mapping explains the extent to which leaders use sound cognitive analyses and mental mapping (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006). Leaders who hypothesize possibilities for the greater good and who succinctly and effectively communicate these possibilities are successful in persuasive mapping. They encourage others to visualize prospects and offer convincing reasoning to motivate those around them. Wisdom is "a combination of awareness of surroundings and anticipation of consequences" (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006, p. 318). Leaders who are attentive, mindful, and preemptive in their personal and professional lives are high in the category of wisdom. "Wisdom is the ideal of perfect and practical, combining the height of knowledge and utility" (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006, p. 318).

Since its verification, the SLQ has been used in a number of studies to measure variables such as antecedents of servant leadership behavior (Beck, 2009), organizational performance (Melchar & Bosco, 2010), and leader effectiveness (Shekari & Nikooparvar, 2012). Further support for the SLQ was Cronbach's alpha coefficient, which provides a measure of internal consistency or reliability of a test or scale. The result of Cronbach's alpha for the SLQ—was α= 0.90. In Barbuto and Wheeler's (2006) study, coefficient alpha reliabilities for the SLQ were measured at both the item level and the scale level (using the five SLQ subscale scores; α= .91)**.** Permission was granted by the authors for the use of the SLQ in this study. In order to determine that the group in this study and the group in Barbuto and Wheeler's study were statistically different or similar to each other, the independent *t*-test was chosen and standard deviation was applied. The choice was supported by the numbers of participants in both studies being similar (N=51 and N=80), as well as each sample being independent from the other.

The second consideration was to understand how people in everyday settings—AmeriCorps volunteers, in this case—create meaning from experience. This consideration was accomplished optimally by gathering qualitative data through personal interviews. Maxwell (1996) suggested five attributes when designing qualitative analysis: (a) to bring consideration and understanding to events, experiences, and insights of those interviewed, (b) to work toward an understanding of specific contexts and practices described by an

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interviewee, (c) to be cognizant of unexpected influences and portents, (d) to recognize the process by which experiences and events take place, and (e) to develop causative relationships.

For the quantitative research, an online survey method was chosen for the benefits of efficacy in turnaround, cost, and administration. Additionally, the benefit of presumed reduction in errors due to the mechanized informational database was a factor in the decision. The SLQ was favorable for completion in one short sitting, further reducing concerns of reliability and validity in the data collection. Research benefits included instantaneous tracking of the number of surveys submitted, thus delivering an efficient method of tracking the number of quantitative responses and gleaning demographics from those participants wishing to continue with the semi-structured interview. The sentence "Please consider your service site and/or intentional community as the organization in this question" was added for clarification because respondents had two organizational resources to which to refer, the organization that sponsored their intentional community, and the organization where they were employed. Participants self-reported servant leader behaviors. Data recording and types of quantitative data were collected via Survey Monkey on a MacBook Air, scored and coded by hand and by IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) statistics program. Instructions for completion of the survey were reproduced and provided with the survey.

Qualitative data were collected through individual, semi-structured, telephone interviews. This format considers the ease and comfort of real-life settings for those being interviewed and the individual experiences of the volunteers. Eight semi-structured interview questions were asked via telephone to 10 volunteers. The volunteers were self-nominated by answering an interest question at the end of the quantitative survey. All qualitative volunteers were contacted via phone or e-mail for an interview within 24 hours of their self-nomination. Queries that regarded the AmeriCorps year-of-service experience and aligned with the three research questions were used. To acquire complete data, pre-designated, semi-structured, open-ended questions regarding experiences, behaviors, opinions, knowledge, and background were used to support or refute the results of the SLQ. Data collected during telephone interviews were recorded with a Zoom H2 recorder, downloaded onto a MacBook Air, and transcribed by Rev Transcription Company. Written results were analyzed by hand and coded using NVivo10 computer software. NVivo10 was adapted for MacBook Air with Parallels computer software installed by the Department of Information Technology at Creighton University.

Participants were AmeriCorps volunteers providing one year of service who received a higher education tuition reimbursement of approximately $5,500 in exchange for 50 weeks of service, 40 hours per week (AmeriCorps, 2013), and were paid in full at the end of their tenure. All volunteers received room and board, $75.00 per month, and health insurance. Each resided in one of four communities—Urban Servant Corps, Border Servant Corps, Jesuit Volunteer Corps Northwest, or Catholic Vincentian Volunteers—and served with partner agencies in Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington, Colorado, and New Mexico. Participants were both males and females, and were aged 23 to 59 at the time of the interview. All held at least a four-year undergraduate degree, and some held master's or doctoral degrees.

A letter of introduction was sent to the program directors of four sponsoring organizations in order to explain the study. A follow-up phone call was made several days afterward. Barbuto and Wheeler's (2006) SLQ (Self/Leader version only) was distributed to the four program directors who managed the 30 intentional living communities of 174 AmeriCorps volunteers who served at 155 service sites. The four program managers were not invited to participate in the study. Two of the four non-profit organizations were supported by Roman Catholic administrations, and two of the four were supported by the Lutheran Synod (Border Servant Corps, 2013; Colorado Vincentian Volunteers, 2013; Jesuit Volunteer Corps Northwest, 2013; Urban Servant Corps, 2013). Consideration was given to the volunteers' perceived roles and identifications of the program directors. Invitations were then sent via

mass e-mail from the program directors to the volunteers. The program directors had no knowledge of who participated in this study. Participants were directed to the SLQ on Survey Monkey after acknowledging ethical guidelines and considerations. A goal of 100 responses was anticipated from the 174 volunteers. Exclusions included surveys returned twice by the same participant and second-year AmeriCorps volunteers.

For the qualitative portion, volunteers who responded affirmatively to an interview request were contacted to discuss their leadership experiences. Invitations to complete the questionnaire were sent via e-mail to all participants who indicated interest at the end of the quantitative survey, and a reminder was sent one week later. The qualitative interviews continued until saturation with each interview lasting no longer than 60 minutes, with no more than 15 interviews. Exclusions included the researcher's biological relatives and second-year AmeriCorps volunteers.

Denzin and Lincoln (2003) suggested credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability establish trustworthiness in qualitative research. Qualitative validation strategies were instituted to ensure integrity and plausibility of the findings. Transferability, the ability of other researchers to apply findings in future research, was established by acquiring interviews rich in description. Dependability, the strength of the findings, and conformability, the lucidity of the data to outcomes, were achieved using an audit trail. Reexamining all qualitative information to determine whether coding of emergent themes was applicable in all instances was also applied. Creswell (1998) noted Husserl's (1970) approach when describing an interviewer's experiences: bracketing, intuiting, analyzing, and describing. This phenomenological approach requires a researcher to conduct interviews without predetermined ideas. Consideration of participants' interactions, experiences, and attitudes should be foremost in the researcher's mind (Creswell, 1998). To do so, the researcher must disregard or bracket preconceptions to focus on responses. This approach was chosen to understand and appreciate the reality and depth of the volunteer experience. Although the researcher may have had preconceptions regarding the content of the transcripts, all expectations were suspended, allowing the survey and interview responses to determine results. The researcher's ability to bracket perspectives of practice was supported by prior education and experience in this phenomenon.

Patton (2001) suggested the need for researcher sensitivity to bias and error, as the potential of researcher influence during an interview is significant. Many of these factors, such as the respondent's perceptions of the interviewer's characteristics (e.g., sex, race, perceived social status, etc.) are difficult to overcome (Creswell, 1998). As a licensed clinician, the researcher was mindful that interviewers project personal attitudes and anticipate responses, both of which corrupt data. The researcher used a separate worksheet to record reflexive summaries of volunteer responses during interviews to bracket information received. Each interviewee was allowed access to his/her transcript via e-mail. In order to apply precise explanation and strictness in meaning interpretation in qualitative interviews to the exactness in quantitative measurements, volunteers were reminded verbally of the study's restrictions and permissions obtained by the researcher.

When completed, the digital recordings were destroyed. All written and recorded information was downloaded and erased from the researcher's computer. Downloaded information was secured in a safe located in the researcher's home, with the combination known to only the researcher. Participant names were removed from data, and the researcher used numerical coding to identify respondents in both the data collection and final report.

NVivo 10 coding software was used to identify themes and patterns that fit the semi-structured interview questions. Any additional information pertaining to the identity of participants, such as documents and personal conversations, were coded by hand. Thematic inferences drawn from a succinct review of the literature provided reinforcement of results from the SLQ and a basis of question formation. Creswell's (2006) recommended benchmarks for gathering qualitative data were followed to maximize objectivity, credibility, and dependability for the use of use of audio-visual materials, inclusion of documents, and the

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facilitation of interviews. Finalized data were interpreted using a blended phenomenological and case study approach that identified both servant leadership traits and the narrative discovery of information from the interviews (Creswell & Plano 2006).

The researcher was the sole principal investigator and the contact for survey distribution and data collection. The researcher was also the only person with access to identifying information regarding volunteer participants and their contributions. The participants received the survey and were asked to type their initials indicating consent to participate in the interviews. Results of the individual quantitative battery were made available to volunteers who participated. To ensure confidentiality, participants in the quantitative portion were identified by numerical codes. All participants were over the age of 19 and did not receive financial or other beneficial remuneration. All communication and correspondence with participants reinforced the importance and security of the researcher's discretion and confidentiality. The interviews were coded with first and last initials, and a separate key file contained the names and e-mail addresses of those interviewed to allow respondent validation and clarification. The interviews took place at an agreed time and date, with all participants comfortable with those times and dates. There was no cost to the participants associated with the interviews other than the time warranted for completion of the survey and, if indicated and willing, the interview itself. Participants benefitted from outcomes gleaned from this study, potential gratification from contributing to the study, and knowledge gained on the subjects of servant leadership and volunteerism. Electronic results of the survey and the audio recordings were stored on an external hard drive and housed in a safe for one year before being destroyed. A Licensed Professional Counselor, the researcher teaches Legal and Ethical Issues in Counseling at the Graduate level and is practiced in interviewing protocols.

Results

Quantitative results

Self-reported information regarding age, gender, ethnicity, and residence was gathered prior to the participants answering 23 items aligned to altruism, emotional healing, wisdom, persuasive mapping, and organizational stewardship. Respondents ranked themselves on their thoughts and behaviors using a Likert scale, identifying the degree to which the characteristics most accurately described them. An electronic version of Barbuto and Wheeler's (2006) SLQ generated 51 responses from 174 invited AmeriCorps volunteers, representing a 29.3% response rate over a period of 21 days. Fifty-one AmeriCorps volunteers, 39 female (76.5%) and 12 male (23.5%), participated in the quantitative portion of the study. The volunteers identified themselves as belonging to one of four age groups: 18 to 24 (86.3%), 25 to 34 (9.8%), 35 to 44 (2.0%), or 55 to 64 (2.0%). The ethnic identity of the majority of respondents was White/Caucasian (82.4%), followed by Asian/Pacific Islander (7.8 %), Hispanic American (5.9%), and American Indian/Alaskan Native (3.9%). No Black or African Americans participated in this study. Volunteers noted the address of their states of permanent residency. Clusters of states fell into natural separation, with the top 39.1% of participants originating from Washington (13.7%), California (9.8%), Iowa (7.8%), and New Jersey (7.8%). The succeeding states of Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, and Nebraska (each equally represented with 5.9% permanent residencies) comprised the next 23.6%, resulting in a combination of nearly two-thirds of volunteers (62.7%). Of the remaining states, 16 represented the northeast, northwest, and central parts of the United States, with 19 volunteers comprising approximately 33% of the total. Of particular note was a cluster of southern states having no volunteers represented: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee.

Statistics were evaluated for all data collected from volunteers in this study (N = 51) who took the SLQ. Standard deviations across all five subscales ranged from 0.46 (altruistic

calling) to 0.47 (organizational stewardship). The means across all five subscales of servant leadership ranged from 2.69 (emotional healing) to 3.2 (organizational stewardship) as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: *Group Statistics and Correlations of this study (N=51)*

Group statistics	Means	Standard deviations
Altruistic Calling	2.916	0.4681
Emotional Healing	2.699	0.4671
Wisdom	3.014	0.4650
Persuasive Mapping	2.835	0.4778
Org. Stewardship	3.282	0.4786

Statistics from Barbuto and Wheeler (2006) reported that in the study of 80 participants, the standard deviation remained fairly consistent across all five subscales and ranged from .49 (emotional healing and organizational stewardship) to .58 (wisdom). The leaders' mean across all five subscales of servant leadership ranged from 2.28 (persuasive mapping) to 2.98 (organizational stewardship). The means across all five subscales of servant leadership ranged from 2.28 (persuasive mapping) to 2.98 (organizational stewardship) (Barbuto &Wheeler, 2006) Wheeler's original scores from the study are located in Table 2 (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006, p. 313).

Table 2: *Group Statistics and Correlations for Barbuto and Wheeler's Original Sample (N=80)*

Group statistics	Means	Standard deviations
Altruistic Calling	2.94	0.53
Emotional Healing	2.48	0.49
Wisdom	2.97	0.58
Persuasive Mapping	2.28	0.57
Org. Stewardship	2.98	0.49

In comparing the two studies, three categories with the highest mean scores for organizational stewardship (3.28), wisdom (3.01), and altruistic calling (2.91) in this study were analogous to Barbuto and Wheeler's (2006) findings, which demonstrated organizational stewardship (2.98), wisdom (2.97), and altruistic calling (2.94) as the highest reported attributes for the self/leader version of the SLQ. The mean scores of the subtest persuasive mapping and emotional healing were the lowest scores on both studies. However, the mean scores from this study in persuasive mapping (2.83) and emotional healing (2.69) ranked fourth and fifth, while the scores from Barbuto and Wheeler's study placed emotional healing (2.48) fourth, and persuasive mapping (2.28) fifth. Table 3 presents the illustration.

Table 3: *Means Rank, high to low, of both studies*

Group statistics	Means Rank in this study	Means Rank of Barbuto and Wheeler (2006)
Altruistic Calling	3	3
Emotional Healing	5	4
Wisdom	2	2
Persuasive Mapping	4	5
Organizational Stewardship	1	1

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The results showed no significance between the two studies in the areas of altruistic calling and wisdom. The results in the remaining three areas, emotional healing, persuasive mapping, and organizational stewardship, however, did show significance at the .05 level ($p < 0.05$). In all three areas, the means in this study were higher than the means in the Barbuto and Wheeler Study, as shown in Tables 4 through 8.

Table 4: *One Sample Test: Altruistic Calling*

	Test Value = 2.94					
	t	*df*	*Sig. (2-tailed)*	*Mean Difference*	*95% Confidence Interval of the Difference*	
					Lower	*Upper*
Altruistic Calling	*-.356*	*50*	*.723*	*-.02333*	*-.1550*	*.1083*

Table 5: *One Sample Test: Emotional Healing*

	Test Value = 2.48					
	t	*df*	*Sig. (2-tailed)*	*Mean Difference*	*95% Confidence Interval of the Difference*	
					Lower	*Upper*
Emotional Healing	*3.355*	*50*	*.002*	*.021951*	*.0881*	*.3509*

Table 6: *One Sample Test: Wisdom*

	Test Value = 2.97					
	t	*df*	*Sig. (2-tailed)*	*Mean Difference*	*95% Confidence Interval of the Difference*	
					Lower	*Upper*
Wisdom	*.686*	*50*	*.496*	*.04467*	*.04467*	*.1755*

Table 7: *One Sample Test: Persuasive Mapping*

	Test Value = 2.28					
	t	*df*	*Sig. (2-tailed)*	*Mean Difference*	*95% Confidence Interval of the Difference*	
					Lower	*Upper*
Persuasive Mapping	*8.299*	*50*	*.000*	*.55529*	*.4209*	*.6897*

Table 8: *One Sample Test: Organizational Stewardship*

	Test Value = 2.98					
	t	*df*	*Sig. (2-tailed)*	*Mean Difference*	*95% Confidence Interval of the Difference*	
					Lower	*Upper*
Organizational Stewardship	*4.511*	*50*	*.000*	*.30235*	*.1677*	*.4370*

Qualitative results

Over a period of three weeks, 18 volunteers responded favorably by showing interest in or agreement to participation in a semi-structured phone interview. Of the 18, 11 responded within one week to an e-mail sent by the researcher offering either to establish an appointment for an interview or receive additional information. Of the 11 initial contacts, 10 responded timely, and 10 interviews were conducted over a three-week period during July

and August 2013. The remaining seven initial contacts received a subsequent e-mail or phone message one week following the last contact, but failed to respond to either communication. The eight open-ended questions or prompts in the semi-structured interviews sought answers to the three research questions:

1. Explain how you came to the decision to volunteer for a year of service.
2. Describe events or experiences that had a significant impact on your life prior to making the commitment to a year of service.
3. Recall your first few weeks at your service site. What impressions of leadership, either from other volunteers, staff, or guests, do you remember?
4. Describe how you see yourself as a leader at your service site.
5. Describe your intentional community. How do you see leadership in your residence?
6. How do you see yourself as a leader now as compared to this time last year? What ideas do you have regarding your abilities to be a leader in the future?
7. Is there any one person who by example, modeled, or inspired you to do service?
8. Regarding leadership, what ideas do you have that you may not have gotten to talk about thus far?

The goal was to prompt descriptive thoughts, opinions, and ideas. The questions established rapport and history of prior leadership, capturing volunteer experiences of observing others eliciting servant leadership behaviors and defining volunteer self-identity. Three of 10 interviewees were male and seven were female. Their ethnicities identified were White/Caucasian (8), and Asian/Pacific Islander (2). Participant names, religious affiliations, affiliations with service sites, and names of intentional communities were omitted to retain anonymity. AB worked for a new non-profit organization in strategic planning and program development in New Mexico. CD worked for a nationally recognized runaway home in Alaska. EF wrote grants and provided homeless prevention support in Colorado. GH provided academic support to impoverished youths in Colorado. IJ interviewed and counseled incarcerated teens and young adults in Oregon. KL worked at a homeless day shelter in Oregon. MN worked at an afterschool educational program for homeless families in Washington. OP presented disaster preparedness training in Alaska. QR managed a homeless shelter in Idaho. ST provided childhood education support in an after-care program in Colorado. Table 9 represents this and additional demographic information received through the interviews.

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Table 9: *Summary of Salient Demographic Information for Qualitative Responses*

Summary of Salient Demographic Information										
Name	AB	CD	EF	GH	IJ	KL	MN	OP	QR	ST
Gender	M	F	F	F	F	F	M	F	M	F
Age	34	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23
Ethnicity	White	White	White	White	Pacific Islander	White	Pacific Islander	White	White	White
School	Jesuit	Marionist	Benedictine	Augustinian	Jesuit	Jesuit	Congregation of Holy Cross	Jesuit	Jesuit	Augustinian
Home State	Maryland	Indiana	Minnesota	Louisiana	California	Iowa	Washington	Missouri	Oregon	Illinois
Service Site	New Mexico	Alaska	Colorado	Colorado	Minnesota	Oregon	Washington	Alaska	Idaho	Colorado
Service Function	Program Development	Homeless Shelter	Transition Housing	Remedial Education	Legal Defense	Educ. Program	Educ. Program	Disaster Relief	Homeless Shelter	Aftercare Program
Number Vol. Residing in Community	18 in two houses	7 in one house	19 in two houses	20 in two houses	5 in one house	8 in one house	3 in one house	7 in one house	6 in one house	20 in two houses
Consider year 2 of service	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

The transcribed interviews gave the researcher a variety of experiences, feelings, and thoughts from the volunteers to provide answers to the research questions. When possible, the researcher interwove quantitative and qualitative responses to offer a thorough and well-rounded discussion. The purpose was to interpret and appreciate the power of the volunteers' conversations. Expressive quotations were used to demonstrate the involvedness of the rich, dense data and broaden the discussion of findings.

Research Question One: Do Long-Term AmeriCorps Volunteers Self-Identify with Traits of Servant Leadership?

Yes, AmeriCorps volunteers self-identified with traits of servant leadership. The volunteers' responses lent easily to the five subsections: organizational stewardship, altruistic calling, persuasive mapping, wisdom, and emotional healing. Responses often overlapped when addressing one subsection, but touched on one or more of the remaining four and, in turn, referred to research question number one (Figure 1). The AmeriCorps volunteer leadership paradigm was challenged by new experiences through a powerful backdrop of social injustice.

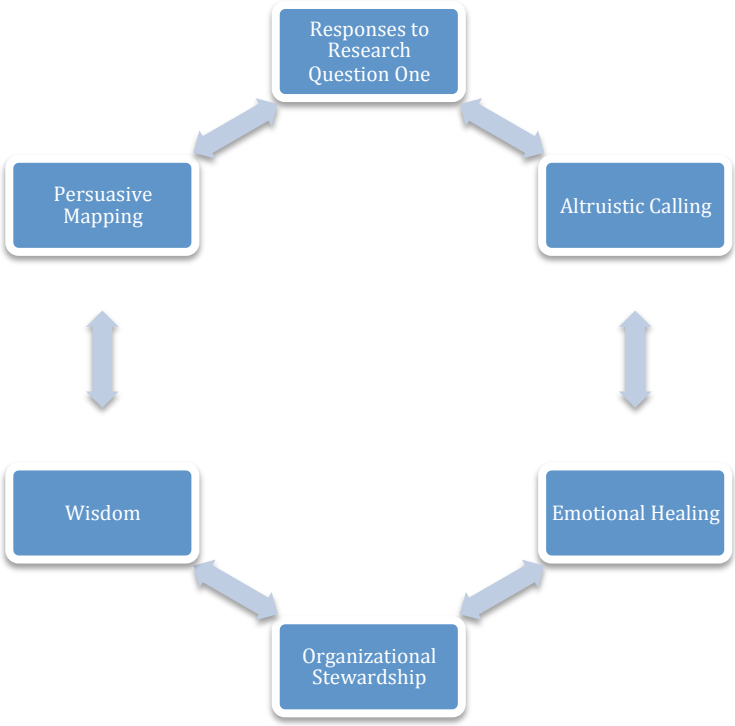

Figure 1. Response categories for AmeriCorps volunteers question one information.

Acknowledging the servant leadership traits they held provided insights into the profundity of personal values and intensity of work required to integrate servant leadership as a lifestyle. The following are verbal illustrations provided by the volunteers:

Altruistic Calling The volunteers' passion for and need to render a difference in their communities was evidenced by their generosity of time and sprit, marking altruistic calling.

> OP: That every day, no matter if you're doing a menial task or in charge of an exciting task, you're still working under one mission, and one goal of helping other people ultimately and unconditionally.

Emotional Healing Volunteers facilitated healing with their expressions of spirituality, culture, sensitive communication skills, and realization of empathy.

> EF: I have learned how to speak in a more compassionate community style. Non-verbal communication is so important. Just being able to express our feelings in a less verbal way to make sure that people aren't feeling called out specifically. I saw the expression on their faces. Maybe I needed to learn not to presume how someone was feeling. That helped the community heal.

Wisdom Volunteers were aware of their surroundings and anticipated consequences, syndicating personal and practical information as a tool for developing skills necessary to become a servant leader.

> EF: It's hard to separate the two, but I think I learned the most acutely within my community and then was able to apply that at service or with my family or in other situations. In my community, things were up close and personal. The communication you could see right away. You could say something two different ways. You'd try it

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one way, you'd see it wouldn't work, you'd bring it back and you'd rephrase it, and you'd see it go differently. I learned a lot from that.

Persuasive Mapping Volunteers envisioned possibilities, analyzed environments, and strived to motivate others.

OP: I'm the preparedness specialist for all of Alaska. I've helped build the preparedness education program by basically going out in the community and giving presentations for all different ages. I wanted to develop a program for the future helping them understand how to be more prepared for a natural disaster.

Organizational Stewardship Volunteers' desires to serve, support, and join others in giving back to the community was evidenced in organizational stewardship.

AB: I want to get actively involved in community partnerships, because I'm really passionate right now in recognizing resources in the community and bringing those together. Like bringing the stakeholders in the community together to dialog about I just feel really called to that kind of networking. I'm probably not the person gotten to know X. I've gotten to know Y. I've gotten to know Z. Why don't we all get together and hash something out and see where it goes?" I'm just really interested in collaboration.

Research Question Two: What Information Regarding Self-Perceived Leadership Traits in Year-of-Service Volunteers Emerge from Semi-Structured Interviews

AmeriCorps volunteers realized that by integrating their self-perception of servant leadership, they invoked a desire to become agents of change, both in their personal identities and as stakeholders in their intentional and work communities. Responses to research question two fell into two categories. In category one, responses led to disclosure of a more personal nature based on experiences prior to joining AmeriCorps. In category two, responses led to direct action that occurred during their tenures with AmeriCorps (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Illustration of categorical responses.

Category One: Personal Awareness Responses

Personal Awareness Responses of experiences prior to joining AmeriCorps parted easily into three central themes that provided an undercurrent of awareness or tenor of the conversations. They are mysticism, trauma in personal history, and dignity of risk (Figure 3).

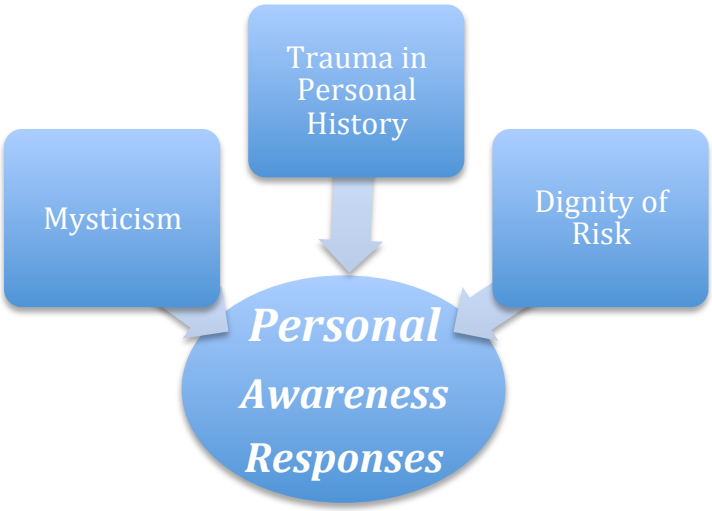

Figure 3. Personal awareness responses.

Mysticism The first theme was mysticism or spiritual identification and relationship with God. All but two of the interviewees led by personal religious affiliation. Several noted they were not Catholic; one had strong influences of Buddhism in his/her spiritual practice. All four of the intentional community organizations (two Lutheran and two Catholic supported) were represented in the qualitative portion of the research. All 10 attended Catholic universities in the United States. The researcher attributed the descriptive information surrounding topics such as discernment and the process of reflection, and phrases such as "ruined for life" and "seeking the charisma of St. Vincent" to the Catholic university experience. As one participant explained:

The service components, the commitments to communities that are underserved, the identification with people who experience material poverty always just resonated with me. I've always been drawn to that aspect of the Roman Catholic tradition. That's where I really discovered the need involved in social work and service work, specifically with people who are experiencing extreme poverty. Then, kind of discovering my own faith in seeking that out.

Trauma of personal history The second theme was trauma within their personal history. Six of 10 volunteers (60%) mentioned trauma in their histories, stemming from their families and defining variables such as physical and mental disabilities, domestic and sexual abuse, alcoholism, financial stress, and single-parent households. Shriberg, Lloyd, Shriberg, and Williamson (1997) explained that those who become servant leaders assert that one's own personal healing can often become an initiating resource and impetus for leadership. These servant leaders maintained unique awareness and motivation while seeking restoration in the community. They were also strongly aware that to be immersed fully in the servant leader philosophy, they needed to initiate self-transformation and inner healing. They sought not to abandon their experiences as they knew them, but to find sense—some in spiritual identification—alongside their experiences. The transformation to servant leader allowed them to address homelessness, addiction, and loss. One volunteer offered:

> I loved my dad, but he's still an active alcoholic, and us kids, I mean we were the playthings of his existence. I'm also involved in the recovery community, Alcoholics Anonymous. I mean, I could tell you so many men and women I've met in that group who are role models. What I find there is, in Jungian terms, like keeping the shadow out in front of us.

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The dignity of risk For transformation to occur, risk is inevitable. For those with compromised abilities—intellectual, developmental, social, or emotional—risk taking bears considerable concern for both the person compromised and the person's caregiver. The volunteers naturally wished to minimize harm, not appear negligent in their responsibilities and to care for the whole person. Ellison (2011) describes the dignity of risk as allowing one to maintain self-respect and esteem regardless of compromise or challenge. Servant leaders in this study had a need to acknowledge the right to take risks—both for themselves and for the people with whom they worked—because denying the right would have led to further compromise of esteem and well being.

Acknowledging dignity of risk emerged as the third reoccurring theme, and was one verbalized well by several volunteers:

> GH: It's a lot harder for me to allow people to struggle through things, especially with a situation that I've gone through and could be better or faster at. To see people struggle through; sometimes I just want to be the savior. I really try to recognize that someone allowed me to struggle through that also. Looking at what I learned through doing and allowing someone else to do the same… I have a more empathic understanding. That is what gets me through those times.
> QR: I would have really loved to do that this year, but I didn't feel like…I have this love/hate with photography because I feel like you can definitely encroach on someone's didn't want to do that. I didn't want to enter into the shelter and have this position like I've really created these amazing relationships with many of the guests, I feel like I don't know what I would have taken pictures of this year if it wasn't the homeless community because that's where my passion was here.
> CD: One of the things that I learned at my service site that I see also needing to play a role in any "Maybe I'm thinking I know what they should do in this situation. Maybe I'm trying to give them advice, but really what I should be doing is giving them the decision and letting them do their best with it and supporting them no matter what." I could see the JVC [Jesuit Volunteer Corps] folks weren't going to say, "This is what you should do." That's leadership right there.

Category Two: Direct Action Responses

In Category two, direct action responses, the information sorted easily into four sectors. Servant leadership is a state of being. If one is a servant leader, then one uses his or her gifts and talents as a call for action in service. Gifts and talents are defined as charisms. The four sectors or charisms in the volunteers' direct action responses were calling, connection, communication, and commitment. Beyond just becoming sectors, the four charisms are direct segues to the tenets of servant leadership (Figure 4). The four charisms became agents of change.

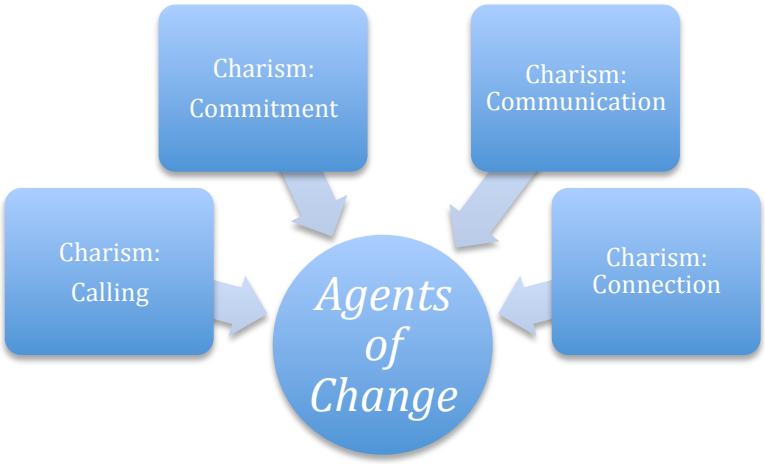

Figure 4. Illustration of direct action responses.

Change Agency Number One: Calling AmeriCorps volunteers personified Brown's (2012) application of calling, which "describes a participant's discovery, often ritually marked, by an inner truth and mission in the service of others" (p. 153).

> AB: I think JVI [Jesuit Volunteer Corps International] and JVC [Jesuit Volunteer Corps] have that phrase, "Ruined for life." I think it's entirely accurate, more than any other volunteer program I've been around. I sort of intuitively just knew going into it, that I was being called. There's no way of really avoiding surrendering yourself to be in solidarity with the community in which you're living.
> ST: There was an intensity of purpose. People really speaking to figure out what might what is my calling?
> KL: We just wanted to talk. It was people on both sides of the fence, but border patrol were really upset that we were trying to just be in community with people who lived across an invisible line from us. It just really was very … it was very important to hear their stories about how their families with four or five of my really good friends, and we had some different beliefs going in, but after way as I felt before I went there. I had so much trust and so much vulnerability and I really wanted to accompany people a different way.

Change Agency Number Two: Commitment AmeriCorps volunteers learned that commitment is both a process and an outcome. Greenleaf (1991) wrote, "Able leaders are usually sharply awake and reasonably disturbed" (p. 29). Discernment, or decision-making that aligns with both Greenleaf's reference to being reasonably disturbed and the desire to do the will of God as pronounced strongly for the volunteers when faced with committing to service. Discernment suggests a mindfulness of intention and ideas joined with feelings more profound than the volunteers may have experienced before.

> GH: Then for the next few months of my life it was really for me, praying about what I wanted to do. I went through a whole discernment process of: Am I just doing service because it's what I'm expected to do? Am I doing this because I don't know what else to do because getting a job is scary to me? Ultimately I realized that it was a combination of those things, but it really was what God was calling me to do. For me things just fell into place and I was accepted into the program that I wanted to do and just really had a lot of peace surrounding my decision. That's how I based my decision the whole time was on peace in my

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heart. When I didn't feel peace I knew it was because there were questions that I needed to be asking myself and I needed to pray about and discern.
IJ: I know that I needed to continue doing this. I loved working with these people and I know what they're talking about: they need people that look at them as people and don't judge them because they are afraid of working with people that could be felons, or prostitutes, or drug dealers. That's what we've been trying to avoid and not feel empathy for them. Now I feel as though I could be a part of them healing emotionally.

Change Agency Number Three: Communication AmeriCorps volunteers learned to communicate in a different way. Communication implies an exchange that bears information or creates meaning for both the one giving and one receiving. Greenleaf's (1991) original tenets present the servant leader with the archetype of communication and the exemplars for listening, healing, persuasion, stewardship, and awareness. AmeriCorps volunteers found this archetype in their desire to live communally, embrace their passion for social justice, and seek peaceful meaning. They created a need that involved working outside their traditional framework of leading others. Their prior communication styles, like a well-worn shield, formerly had protected them through other transformative stages. Although well intended, their manner in processing communal living and poverty became wholly insufficient in their new endeavors.

GH: I think a lot of what our leadership in my community ends up working with is humility and stepping back. Then, realizing that we have a lot to learn about leadership and allowing others to different way. I think there's a lot of leadership in that humility. I think a lot of us consider leadership in ways we hadn't before.
CD: What we were was a day space where people came in to the drop-in center with a variety of needs. One of the biggest things we did was build relationships. That's something that you can't read a manual on and then go out and do it. You have to pull from your own sense of humor and your own conversational style and try to figure out
ST: We weren't being honest all the time. I think after that conversation, we were like, okay, we obviously need to be more clear about when we're having these group decisions or these group conversations. Not everyone is saying what they want, and so we kind of came up with the idea of when we are trying to make a group consensus about something or trying to make a big decision that everyone gets a chance to say what they want, and making sure that happens. Not sometimes, but always.

AmeriCorps volunteers discovered how to use methods of conflict resolution modeled for them by other servant leaders.

CD: I definitely learned a lot about communication, direct communication and being about what it is that you want and what you're trying to say without backing off of your own opinion. The difference between assertive communication and aggressive communication was made totally clear to me throughout all those countless discussions I mentioned with my community.
KL: One of my housemates, she's a very, very strong leader. She's very quiet about it. I think that that leadership style is interesting… She did a lot of active listening and making sure that everyone was heard. Not necessarily taking the reins in the way that I did a lot of the time, but she actually would go to people individually afterward and make sure that they felt that their needs were being heard and understood. She was very good at that. She was

> very strong relationally, I guess. Just being able to notice that a person doesn't feel good about themselves right now, she sees that and sees the need to try and find a way to help with them. She wasn't nearly as director related, but more of a laid-back person. Still, she got a lot done as a leader because she thought to check in with everyone quietly and make sure we were all in agreement before we really took any action. I had never thought of working that way before.

Change Agency Number Four: Connections Coming to understand how connections were woven into the servant leadership paradigm, AmeriCorps volunteers sought autonomy. As servant leaders, they practiced appropriate departure in times of stress as a catalyst for making optimum use of personal resources. The need for autonomy, the drive toward personal agency in the context of community, separation, and financial independence, endowed the volunteers with the value of inner authority while working among others (Brown, 2012).

> QR: What's different inside of me? I think I am more aware about how to take care of myself as a human being and when I need my personal space and knowing that, I'm able to serve better. I know at the beginning of the year, I was probably running myself more into the ground; and as the year progressed, I knew that I needed to take more walks, and play my guitar more, and do more things for myself, and have that time.
> AB: I think a year later I'm much more comfortable being accountable for my actions with others. I can make mistakes and they don't kill me. I don't have to be perfect. I don't even really…it's not even a principle I really value much, perfection, any more than I used to. There's a certain level of like flexibility that's come into my life that hasn't always been there. I think I would have called it flexibility in the past, but honestly it was indecision and fear. A kind of unhealthy placid openness towards things, just like passivity.

AmeriCorps volunteers grew to identify ethically appropriate connections and value the challenge of living as a servant leader.

> QR: A lot of times, you know, I work to make the connection. I work so that when I see these people again, from the beginning and to the end, these people know my name. They have a name and a face and they know that I was kind and I believed in them. So when they come up, I'm not going to build a friendship because it's so important to have boundaries to stay professional but be available to them at the same time.
> MN: We're an all volunteer staff, and it's just an amazing group of people who really just care about the people there, and so learning the names and checking on people like, how did that job interview go? Not just handing out sandwiches. That's not what it was about. It was very much about making those connections, and then if you were doing that and making everyone there realize that they are human beings, too and deserve to be given the dignity of being recognized, then you are doing the right thing.
> GH: I think that a huge, huge thing I learned was St. Vincent was known for his ability to basically network and to be a bridge. I think that is one of the hugest things that I have gotten out of who are paying for my job to exist, which can be really hard for people I think. I think it's a fun and interesting challenge to be able to talk to them to get them tounderstand the same things. To talk to donors about what I do and then to talk to clients and help them understand certain things. That I have gotten.

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Exploring data provided from the interviews, responses fell into two categories, and each held several sectors of personal and action-related responses that are indicated in Figure 5.

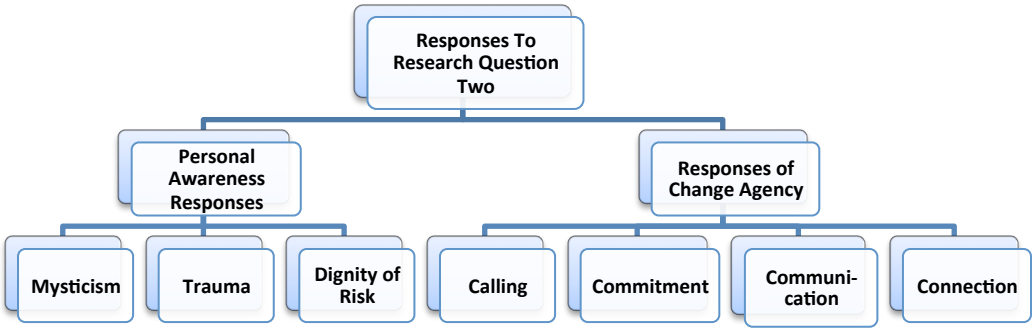

Figure 5. Illustration of servant leadership categories and sectors of AmeriCorps volunteers.

Research Question Three: Were the Traits of Servant Leadership Modeled for the Volunteers Prior to Committing to Reside in an Intentional Community?

In response to the third research question, nine of 10 volunteers affirmed that the traits of servant leadership were modeled for them prior to committing to a year of service. They also provided identification and reasoning regarding selection. One volunteer "could not identify" a person who emulated servant leadership in this instance. For the positive responses, parents (5), professors (1) church leaders (1) and program directors (2) modeled the behaviors for them.

> AB: I referenced him already, but my father's ability to be honest with people, not in a way that's harmful or hurtful. I have always just deeply admired that. He's a fearlessman when it comes to communicating with others with issues like hard truth because sometimes, especially in justice work, there are things that need to be spoken. My dad has a fearlessness about that. He's always been a strong advocate for people who experience marginal invasion.
>
> QR: I'm the younger sister, but I had to be big sister, and so learning how to be present to another person who maybe isn't always as present to you as you'd like them to be, and seeing my mother be really, really good with him, and trying to reflect how well she works with him; so definitely, my mom.
>
> EF: He reminded me a lot of my dad who is a really spiritual stronghold. I get a sense of peace from my dad and a sense of adventure. I knew that this was going to be a good experience.
>
> MN: He was a really dedicated to helping to develop our congregation, and give them opportunities to interact with the world around them instead of just teaching them, "Oh, this is what the Bible says." or teaching from the catechism. But really being like, this is how you show that in the real world. He was a really great leader in the sense of need. He also is a very dedicated person to his job and his position, and to service. I think that was something that was really inspiring to me at a younger age.

The collective experiences of those interviewed, prior to the decision to commit to a year of service, became the catalysts for responsive change and consideration of those who have served as role models before them. Specifically, they came to value not only the impressions of those they encountered in their formative years, but other servant leaders within their intentional and service communities. The findings of this study provide opportunities to synthesize the progression of servant leadership against the backdrop of the AmeriCorps experience.

Discussion

While this study provides contributions to servant leadership research as applied to long term national volunteerism, like all research studies, this study is not without limitations. This study is first limited to the demographic representation and respect to representation of non-Catholic and non-Lutheran sponsored intentional communities and representation of non-religious organizations in general. Given that variations surrounding current doctrine and practices among Christian denominations, caution is exercised in regards to the connection between demographics and servant leadership among Christians in general and any conclusions made from that connection. Further, this study excluded representation of non-Christian religions and non-religious organizations. The means by which the interviews were conducted varied from Skype to telephone. Some volunteers had limited Internet access that affected availability and privacy of communication. The researcher believes this change enhanced bracketing of responses and eliminated presumptions and/or biases because the researcher had no visual identity available for the volunteers and they had none for the researcher. However, loss of nonverbal communication is acknowledged. Of 51 respondents answering 1,173 questions in total on the SLQ, four items were overlooked or skipped by two respondents.

The percentage of missing data was 0.35%, and the completion rate was 99.65%. Group means were calculated and substituted for the missing answers. Although the numbers changed slightly, no changes were evident to the results or conclusions. The empirical data were collected using single-source self-reported questionnaires. The researcher is aware that both self-report questionnaires and Likert scale design may not indicate true or actual responses. Self-report responses may be over or understated, may reveal a responder bias, or may actually be wholly incorrect responses. The researcher cannot confirm that the volunteer who responded to the questionnaire was, indeed, that volunteer. Opening the design to subsequent phases, some of which could include alternatives to web-based survey, may have decreased some of these concerns. The rate of response for the quantitative portion of the research resulted in a 29.3% response rate. Two considerations may have influenced this rate of return: First, as the survey was distributed near the end of the volunteers' one-year tenure, lack of time and/or transition may have interfered with the volunteers' intentions to submit. Second, intermittent cell phone service may have affected a number of volunteers. One limitation in the collected data refers to size and skew of demographical information, thereby raising consideration of generalizability. Although the participants' assignations were separate, the ideal approach would have used a stratified random sampling. This sample was comprised homogeneously in gender, ethnicity, age, and strong religious affiliation as a result of the limitation of the overall number of responding participants. Although adequate for the purposes of this design, an increased sample and wider demographic would have allowed for a larger potential pool and more variation.

Additional concerns, such as volunteer within community exchange and influence, may also have diminished with additional participants. Numerous respondents per factor or item would have had the potential of supporting research conclusions by virtue of inter-rater reliability. The research did not consider cultural differences among responding volunteers. Hale and Fields (2007) found that national differences exist in servant leadership; thus, future research may benefit from the inclusion of varied demographics in order to acknowledge culture variability. Due to both the number and location of responding participants, community sponsor scattering produced disproportionate results. Although Jesuit Volunteer Corps North West recruits 150 volunteers per year and services five states, and Border Servant Corps, Urban Servant Corps, and Colorado Vincentian Volunteers collectively recruit 60 volunteers per year and service three states, the ratio of numbers of represented participants in both the quantitative and qualitative methods were disproportionately weighted with Jesuit Volunteer Corps North West volunteers. Jesuit Volunteer Corps North West

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encourages members to participate in research, as the organization believes that the research outcome would be beneficial to the organization.

One way participants are encouraged is by posting research opportunities in the organization's monthly newsletter. This support may have attributed to the large representation of responses. Future research would benefit from seeking AmeriCorps volunteers who represent specific demographical information in order to equalize the distribution. After understanding AmeriCorps volunteers' self-perception of servant leaders, a natural progression is AmeriCorps leader behaviors as perceived by the followers of AmeriCorps leaders. Recipients at the AmeriCorps service sites would have potentially provided reflection and feedback from those being served. As such, Barbuto and Wheeler (2006) provided a second rating scale for followers to rate leaders. This response to servant rating scale, as others that could have been used in this study, was not appropriate due to environmental and ability constraints, as well as the scope of this study. Subsequent research may consider the use of an appropriate measure to gather data, followed by analysis from beneficiaries of the AmeriCorps servant leader.

Question One: Self-perception of servant leadership traits

In order to determine the quantitative response to question one, the self-identification of servant leadership traits, the researcher chose a simple and effective means to determine the strength of the comparative evaluation. A numerical comparison in rank was made between the means and standard deviations of the subtests from this study and the means and standard deviations from Barbuto and Wheeler's (2006) original research study. The results showed no significance between the two studies in the areas of altruistic calling and wisdom. The results in the remaining three areas, emotional healing, persuasive mapping, and organizational stewardship, however, did show significance difference at the 0.05 level ($p < 0.05$). In all three areas, the statistical means in this study were higher than the statistical means in Barbuto and Wheeler's study, indicating a higher positive indication of the respondents in the areas of emotional healing, persuasive mapping, and organizational stewardship. In other words, attention is warranted to three subsections, respecting that the statistical significance may not necessarily be credited solely to chance.

In the qualitative research, volunteers in this study graduated from Catholic religious institutions and received support by four religious sponsoring organizations. Barbuto and Wheeler (2006) did not report the religious affiliation of elected community leaders. The average age of Barbuto and Wheeler's participants was nearly 30 years older than the volunteers from this study (ages 23 versus 51). The level of education separated the two groups: This study provided a large majority of volunteers who had recently earned bachelor's degrees while Barbuto and Wheeler (2006) produced 50% with an earned bachelor's degree and 20% with an earned master's degree or higher.

Additional demographic considerations are worthy to note. This study's 51 volunteer leaders were 18% non-Caucasian. Wheeler's 80 volunteers were all residents of one Midwestern state who were attending a convention. Although additional demographic information from that study is limited, information sought on the 2010 U.S. Census (2010 U.S. Census, 2011) provided additional data. The 2010 U.S. Census asked citizens a question of race and citizens self-reported their responses. For the nine Midwestern census identified states (Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wyoming), 16% were non-Caucasian. Future research may investigate whether these percentages are indeed comparable , and, if so, what the data would suggest. Prior academic research addressed demographic influence on servant leadership (McCuddy & Cavin, 2009). McCuddy and Cavin's (2009) data, generated by members of a Christian religious institution, were presumed to increase sensitivity to the tenets of servant leadership. Their findings signified that socioeconomic status, level of educational attainment, age, and domicile, but not gender, are connected to the proclivity toward the philosophy and

behaviors of servant leadership. They also reported that people who demonstrate servant leadership are more likely to reside in rural areas (like Jesuit Volunteer Corp volunteers in Alaska, Montana and Idaho) or in urban centers (like Catholic VincentianVolunteers and Urban Servant Corps volunteers in Denver, Colorado and Los Cruses, New Mexico), rather than those who reside in suburban areas. They also posited less need and therefore fewer opportunities for leaders to serve in their hometowns. Although McCuddy and Cavin's (2009) significant findings may support this position, this researcher is mindful of the power-filled interviews taken with the volunteers in this study that could question that position.

Question Two: Information regarding self-perceived leadership traits in year of service volunteers generated from semi-structured interviews

Altruistic Calling. Previous research has shown that serving others, or altruism, is an important and vital component of leadership effectiveness (Moss, 2007. The findings of this study indicate that an altruistic mindset (i.e. an others orientation, a desire to make a positive difference in the lives of others, and leading to help others) is an essential element in the identification of servant leaders (Beck, 2009). In giving back, the volunteers found a sense of purpose and a vocation not in the mission of their organizations, but an altruistic calling as change agents for social justice. They showed spiritual maturity as they were able to contribute to the community with an adaptable nature. A few found it in their intellectual work. Although influential and leading, AmeriCorps volunteers may or may not be more likely to make their efforts and experiences the means toward a spiritual and intellectual design. There are no definitive answers, but we do know that from these interviews, the 10 were moving forth as graduate students of law and religion, as undergraduate professors, as employees of religious based non profit organizations as pilgrimage takers, as those making second year of service commitments.

Emotional Healing. The data analysis from this study found that finite communication skills, such as active listening, facilitation of conflicts, and understanding of non-verbal messages are necessary skills for servant leaders and underwrite the essence of emotional healing. Barbuto and Wheeler (2006) found that leaders employing emotional healing have strong listening skills and are extremely empathic. Greenleaf (1977) described the characterization of servant leaders as listening, empathy, healing, and awareness. The volunteers recognized the impact of unconditional acceptance with the guests at their worksites by stepping out of their comfort zones, anticipating needs, and welcoming positive interactions. Their level of social tolerance was exceptionally high. At home in their intentional communities, and much like their families of origin, their willingness and ability to offer the same was not as easily translated, resulting in a more arduous undertaking. Here, they began to understand that emotional healing demanded mindful and specific effort and provided a deeper understanding of the process of forgiveness, ultimately leading to a life long pursuit.

Wisdom. Data analysis in the *t*-Test provided no significance in the subsection of wisdom as this study was compared to Barbuto and Wheeler's (2006) study. Despite Barbuto and Wheeler's sample being significantly older, more educated and identified (by election) as community leaders, the national service volunteers provided similar data. Wisdom, operationalized within servant leadership, includes volunteers who learned to be less wary of change and more accepting of relinquishing old paradigms of leadership. Several interviewed reported that they had been accustomed to "being in charge," "giving the directions," and "making decisions for the group." They described becoming more aware, savvier about balancing, and less defensive regarding change. They supported what other researchers (Wong & Page, 2003) mentioned regarding making an adjustment in service with no expectation of reward. Several others spoke about their initial days at the service site and becoming aware of, and grateful for, the autonomy provided by their administrative supervisors. Autonomy led to process over product problem solving and continuous growth in national service volunteers. The researcher was also initially impressed in the interviews with

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the volunteers' capacity to recognize timeless values, intuit the emotions of others, and hold those they served in the highest esteem, all indicators of servant leader behavior.

Persuasive Mapping. Persuasive mapping uses mental models to encourage lateral thinking in others. By sharing their trains of thought in community, they gained the necessary information needed to articulate issues and assist in supporting others. The attributes of persuasive mapping, according to Barbuto and Wheeler (2006), include the capability and capacity to apply sound reasoning for the betterment of the organization.

Organizational Stewardship. The servant leader considers himself or herself as a steward of the institution that employs him or her. As described by Block (1993) "Stewardship means to hold something in trust for another" (p. xx). Servant leaders in this study extended themselves as willing and able to be accountable for the well being of the larger organization by operating in service, rather than in control. Servant leaders observed the members of their organizational community and balanced the distribution of strength and resolution. They encouraged debate, while valuing diversity and difference. They learned to accept constructive feedback. They honored another's personal obligations outside the community. They were aware of boundaries in their service sites. Finally, they created a culture with purpose and vision that unified them as parts of the whole, rather than ones with separate biases.

Spirituality. Greenleaf (1970) quantified that the drive for servant leaders must begin with the conscious choice of service. The participants in this research discerned spiritual calling as a means toward spiritual maturity**.** This topic is a separate consideration, no less important than the five domains of the SLQ. The inclusion of spiritual dimension is present in literature (Greenleaf, 1970) and explained by Greenleaf expert, Frick (2004) :

> In my view of the world there are people whom I would call "spirit carriers." Servants who nurture the human spirit are spirit carriers. They serve to connect those who do the work of the world, or who are being prepared for that role, with vision from both past and contemporary prophets. Those servants find the resources and make the intensive effort to be an effective influence. They don't just make speeches or write books as the prophet does. They are spirit carriers; they connect the prophecy with the people so that it changes their lives. The spirit is power, but only when the spirit carrier, the servant as nurturer of the human spirit, is a powerful and not a casual force. (p. 11)

Learning to serve others genuinely first is not an attraction to all. As volunteer AC explained, "There aren't a whole lot of people who would be willing to do this." In seeking a response to what "this" is, the researcher again referred to the transcripts: "Falling in love with children," "working with humility and stepping back," "learning that patience is a forbearance, letting things unfold." One might consider AmeriCorps volunteers to be contemporary spirit carriers. Entering into the commitment, this group brought strong and powerful spiritual practice.

Question Three: The role of mentor as servant leader

Greenleaf (1970) stipulated a simple, observable test: Do others, while being served, become healthier, wiser, more self-sufficient, and more likely to do the same for others? These attributes are not ephemeral or easily acquired. Recalling efforts of their mentors, in conjunction with the finality of the AmeriCorps experience, gave strong footing for nine of the 10 volunteers interviewed to observe themselves as having grown spiritually and emotionally. As hindsight, they became more cognizant of the value of meaningful understanding of their role models and mentors as servant leaders. Measuring the value of a mentor influence is difficult, at best, to determine. There may be questions even regarding the appropriate measurements for such a test, and the test in itself may not be all that simple. The influence of a mentor as servant leader, through the lens of an AmeriCorps volunteer's perception of self, requires time to process. In order to heal emotionally, acquire wisdom,

define themselves as organizational stewards, the volunteers practiced discernment and reflection. The richness of the semi-structured interviews provided the researcher with dimension and insight into volunteers' self-awareness of their skills as a servant leader and solidified the culmination of their AmeriCorps experiences.

The researcher acknowledged poignancy in conversation as the volunteers also reflected upon their personal trauma and emotional healing. The overriding sentiment was not that they had come to closure regarding these experiences, but the spirit and process by which the work was done. Of note were conversations between the researcher and volunteers that occurred after the formality of the interview and when the recorder was off. In those moments, the researcher became aware of the volunteers' vulnerabilities and sense of loss surrounding closure of the AmeriCorps experience. These conversations revealed participants' collective, lifelong dedication to eleemosynary endeavors that reach far beyond the requirements of a year of service, the events surrounding the service, and against the backdrop of mentor efforts. The volunteers recalled prior servant leaders through a different lens, one laced with the volunteers' newly found perspectives.

Conclusion

Because this study represented the first known mixed method research to study self-perceived traits of servant leadership in year of service AmeriCorps volunteers, these discoveries invite prospective discussion surrounding the ideas of servant leadership and nation service. The small sample size, homogeneous profile, and religious affiliation limit the scope of findings, leading to question true geographical multiplicity. However, the research does supply literature on servant leadership and national service volunteers. The researcher provided the program managers of the sponsoring church affiliated communities and the servant leaders themselves the findings of this study with suggestions for future practice. The suggestions included processing of applicants through a servant leadership framework, further education to incorporate servant leader nomenclature and traits within community, and thematic (altruistic calling, emotional healing, wisdom, persuasive mapping and organizational stewardship) offerings for reflection and discussion. These findings lend themselves as a model for an enlarged study, laying the foundation for an extension to this research to a larger, varied network of year of service volunteers. Modification of both quantitative design to account for method bias, and qualitative design with observational information, would enhance the general framework of this design while adding the small pool of mixed-methods data on servant leadership.

This research also infers attention to organizational and ethical leadership, inviting future research in organizational culture and moral climate. This research also invites query toward the presence of demographic characteristic influence on servant leadership behaviors. Finally, two other AmeriCorps branches, AmeriCorps VISTA and Elder Corps, maintain similar requirements as AmeriCorps, without the intentional community requirement. Incorporating these branches in variation or totality would provide additional means in which to operationalize servant leadership data.

Researchers (Dennis & Bocarnea, 2005; Greenleaf, 1970; Patterson, 2003) emphasized that the system of servant leadership is not a model but a philosophy. Boyum (2006) asserted that clarifying significant conventions of the existence of a philosophy, or an ontology, are part of the implications of leadership. AmeriCorps volunteers in this study dedicated themselves to the philosophy of servant leadership, including reflection of their experiences and demonstrating spiritual practice as evidenced by the quantitative data analysis and meaningful information provided during the interviews.

Further, the results of this study indicate that the philosophy of servant leadership includes both the ontology and spirituality of the servant leader. Separate from the face value of the SLQ results, the rhetorical query of determining what is or what is not servant leadership and how one becomes a servant leader remains. Greenleaf (1977) substantiated the

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premise of AmeriCorps as he differentiated the roles of leader and follower, "Care taken by the servant-first to make sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served" (p. 13). He prioritized servant before leader, a concept benign to many, but a profound distinction to an AmeriCorps volunteer, who foregoes all but basic measureable needs in the name of service to others.

Volunteers in this study described servant leader behaviors supporting Spears' (2010) explanation of Greenleaf's (1970) theory, most noted in the areas of awareness, commitment to the growth of people, and building community. They also adapted to the lifestyle of a national service volunteer. By dedicating their energy and willingness to meet the challenge as a collective servant organization (Laub, 1999), they strengthened their organization's culture, mission, and values. Learning to clearly articulate issues in intentional communities, practicing newly learned facilitation and peacemaking skills, and intellectualizing train of thought communication evidenced this strength. Their own prior leadership styles, by their own admissions, once gravitated toward power exchanges of Type A personalities. Now, their collective move forward is partial to cross-functioning teams who thrive on open dialogue. This study provides the beginning of the evaluation of servant leadership philosophy and behaviors in national service volunteers. These findings call for further investigation relative to national service organizations, secular charitable organizations, additional governmental agencies, or other non-profit businesses. A large number of recommendations for future research that have the potential to improve and expand upon the specific findings of this current study have been offered. The researcher endorses inquiry in servant leadership with a variable of moral accountability in social justice efforts.

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